

ARTICLE 1
 CHIEF A-2

WASHINGTON TIMES
 30 October 1984

Vietnamese civilian forces counted only when dead

FROM COMBINED DISPATCHES

NEW YORK — Civilian "self-defense" forces not considered threatening enough to be counted as enemy troops were tallied in the body count when killed in Vietnam, a general testified yesterday in Gen. William C. Westmoreland's libel suit against CBS.

Retired Maj. Gen. George Godding said, however, that the civilian forces were a minor part of the casualties.

Gen. Godding's testimony came during cross-examination by a CBS lawyer about the role of Viet Cong civilian forces deleted in October 1967 from the official estimate of enemy troop strength.

Gen. Westmoreland, who was commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, is suing the television network over a 1982 documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," which asserted that he dropped the civilian forces from the troop count and lowered the overall estimates of enemy strength to give the impression America was winning a "war of attrition."

Gen. Godding said he had argued for exclusion of Self Defense and Secret Self Defense forces from the enemy troop count because he did not believe they were a military threat. The SD and SSD forces were described as akin to the "home guard" and consisted of "older men, women and children."

Gen. Godding said an attempt was made to avoid subtracting the dead civilian forces from the count of regular and guerrilla enemy troops.

He said he was not "overly concerned" that the civilian casualties might throw off the figures because they were a small part

of the total number of enemy killed. He said that because only 10 percent of them were armed, they were not considered a serious enough threat to include in the total enemy troop count.

Gen. Godding represented Gen. Westmoreland's command at a key August 1967 meeting at CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., where the official estimate of enemy troop strength was discussed.

The CIA contended that the SD and SSD forces should have been included in the estimate, a position Gen. Westmoreland's command opposed.

At the end of a day of intense cross-examination, Gen. Godding conceded he had received a cable from Gen. Westmoreland's command during the conference that implied he was not to allow an increased overall troop estimate because of the potential press reaction.

CBS lawyer David Boies read from the orders that Gen. Phillip Davidson, Westmoreland's intelligence chief, had cabled to Gen. Godding in August 1967. It said that "this headquarters will not accept a figure in excess of the current strength figure carried by the press."

Mr. Boies asked whether the cable showed that Gen. Westmoreland's command would not accept new troop figures because of the press reaction.

"That is his implication here," Gen. Godding answered. "I understood at the time that the press was a definite consideration." But he said this did not affect his performance.